

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 178368
ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DOTE-00 EB-08 /021 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/WE:AHUGHES:SJR

APPROVED BY EUR:RDVINE

EUR/WE:RPAGANELLI

-----034956 150305Z /62

O 142317Z JUL 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BARCELONA IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 178368

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: US, SP, ETRN

SUBJECT: NTSB TEAM TRAVELING TO SPAIN

REF: HUGHES-MINISTER EATON AUGUST 14 TELECON

1. CONTRARY TO EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION BY DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD (NTSB) CHAIRMAN JAMES
KING HAS ORDERED A TEAM OF THREE NTSB ACCIDENT INVESTI-
GATORS TO TRAVEL TO SPAIN JULY 14 ON TWA 905, ARRIVING
MADRID JULY 15 AT 0750. INVESTIGATORS ARE LUDWIG BENNER,
CHARLES P. HOFFMAN, AND LUIS CARMONA. EMBASSY SHOULD
INSTRUCT THE THREE TO REPORT TO EMBASSY AND TAKE NO ACTION
WITHOUT EXPLICIT EMBASSY AUTHORIZATION. THIS INSTRUCTION
HAS ALSO BEEN PASSED TO NTSB BY THE DEPARTMENT.

2. BACKGROUND OF SITUATION IS THAT NTSB OFFICIAL CALLED
EUR/WE JULY 14 TO INFORM THAT NTSB HAD MADE INFORMAL
CONTACT WITH LOW-LEVEL SPANISH OFFICIAL WHO HAD "WELCOMED"
NTSB OFFER OF ASSISTANCE IN THE SAN CARLOS DISASTER. THE
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OFFICIAL, CAPTAIN BELLIDO OF THE SUB-OFFICE OF AIRCRAFT
ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION, HAD APPARENTLY BEEN IN CONTACT WITH
JUDGE AUGUSTINE FERRAR OF TORTOSA, WHO REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN
GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SAN CARLOS INVESTIGATION

(BELLIDO HAD WORKED WITH NTSB ON THE TENERIFE DISASTER).
EUR/WE OFFICER TOLD NTSB HE DOUBTED THAT BELLIDO COULD

SPEAK FOR GOS BUT THAT IN INTEREST OF MOVING ALONG THE NTSB
OFFER OF ASSISTANCE, EUR/WE WOULD TELEPHONE EMBASSY MADRID
WHICH WOULD FORMALLY MAKE THE NTSB OFFER TO THE PROPER
SPANISH OFFICIALS. EMBASSY THEN CONTACTED BOTH SPANISH
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND FOREIGN MINISTRY TO MAKE
OFFER OF NTSB ASSISTANCE, AND WAS TOLD GOS WOULD RESPOND
AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. NEITHER MINISTRY HAD KNOWLEDGE OF
BELLIDO CONTACT WITH NTSB. AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE
EMBASSY, STATE THEN DETERMINED THAT INVESTIGATORS SHOULD
NOT TRAVEL TO SPAIN IN ADVANCE OF GOS DECISION TO ACCEPT
NTSB OFFER, IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBLE IMPRESSION OF US
PRESUMPTUOUSNESS OR PRESSURE. WHEN NTSB CHAIRMAN KING WAS
INFORMED OF STATE DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTION THAT THE INVESTI-
GATORS SHOULD REMAIN IN THE US PENDING A GOS RESPONSE, HE
NEVERTHELESS ORDERED HIS OFFICERS TO PROCEED ON JULY 14 TO
SPAIN. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VISITS, ACCIDENTS, INVESTIGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE178368
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AHUGHES:SJR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780290-0218
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780758/aaaabwtx.tel
Line Count: 78
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 10e10773-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2000930
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NTSB TEAM TRAVELING TO SPAIN
TAGS: ETRN, OTRA, US, SP, NTSB, (BENNER, LUDWIG), (HOFFMAN, CHARLES P), (CARMONA, LUIS)
To: MADRID BARCELONA
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/10e10773-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014